

BOBBY JINDAL  
Governor



JAMES M. Le BLANC  
Secretary

# State of Louisiana

Department of Public Safety and Corrections

February 19, 2015  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Pam Laborde  
225.219.0499

## **Eight Offenders Complete Sign Language Interpretation Program** *ACA Recognizes Program with "Innovation in Corrections" Award*

(Baton Rouge) The Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections (DPS&C) held a graduation ceremony Thursday, February 19, 2015 at Elayn Hunt Correctional Center for eight male and female offenders who have recently completed a three-year sign language interpretation program.

This is the third class of graduates since the Department began the program in 2009, collaborating with Dr. Daniel Burch and Ms. Connie Tullos from Sign Language Services International, Inc. (SLSI).

During its winter conference earlier in February, the American Correctional Association (ACA) recognized DPS&C's program with its "Innovation in Corrections" award for outstanding efforts in reducing recidivism and promoting future success for offenders.

"The success of this program has exceeded our expectations," said DPS&C Secretary James M. Le Blanc. "More than just serving an important function in our prisons, it has changed lives for both our hearing impaired offenders and for our interpreters. It has expanded available programming to the deaf and hearing impaired and has continued tight knit bonds that have followed interpreters and those they are helping from prison to the community."

--MORE--

Thirty-four (34) offenders have graduated from DPS&C's Sign Language Interpretation program, and thirteen (13) of those offenders have earned national certification by scoring a minimum of 3.0 on the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) test and passing a written exam. Many others have successfully passed either the written exam or the performance test and are working toward certification.

Four (male) offenders have completed the program and released from DOC custody. Two of the four are providing interpretation services in Louisiana on a part-time basis and a third is a personal trainer who caters to hearing impaired clients. Another graduate is currently a participant in the Transitional Work Program and provides ASL interpretation in her job.

DPS&C's program consists of six modules of American Sign Language instruction, six modules of Interpretation instruction and six months of internship in specialized areas such as mental health, deaf culture, ASL grammar, religious interpreting and cultural arts. The program is the equivalent of 36 college credits or 1620 hours.

"In Louisiana, Delgado Community College is the only higher education institution that offers a similar program to what the Department has," explained DPS&C attorney Susan Griffin, who is the driving force behind the program. "DPS&C has certified more interpreters than Delgado since 2012. We are proud of our students' achievements and success."

#### 2015 Graduates

Ryan Crotwell (EHCC)  
Frank Motton (LSP)  
Lonnie Thibodeaux (EHCC)  
Patricia Williams (LCIW)

Alairis Payne (LCIW)  
Ronald Reynolds (LSP)  
Michael Williams (LSP)  
Ila Womack-Grey (LCIW)

###